

RPJOB

XX

To the Honorable Members of the Continental Congress,
Representatives of the THIRTEEN UNITED AMERICAN
COLONIES.

MUCH HONORED GENTLEMEN,

AS God, the great father of the universe, has made you the fathers of these Colonies, and in answer to the prayers of his people given you counsel, and that wisdom and integrity, in the exertion of which, you have been such great and extensive blessings and obtained the approbation and applause of your constituents, and the respect and veneration of the nations in whose sight you have acted, in the important, noble struggle for LIBERTY: We naturally look to you in behalf of more than half a million of persons in these Colonies, who are under such a degree of oppression and tyranny, as to be wholly deprived of all civil and personal liberty, to which they have as good a right as any of their fellowmen, and are reduced to the most abject state of bondage and slavery, without any just cause.

We have particular encouragement thus to apply to you since you have had the honor and happiness of leading these Colonies to resolve to stop the slave trade, and to buy no more slaves imported from Africa. We have the satisfaction of the best assurances that you have done this not merely from political reasons; but from a conviction of the unrighteousness and cruelty of that trade, and a regard to justice and benevolence, deeply sensible of the inconsistency of promoting the slavery of the Africans, at the same time we are asserting our own civil liberty, at the risk of our fortunes and lives. This leaves in our minds no doubt of your being sensible of the equal unrighteousness and oppression, as well as inconsistency with our selves, in holding of so many hundreds of thousands of blacks in slavery, who have an equal right to freedom with ourselves, while we are maintaining this struggle for our own and our children's liberty: and a hope and confidence that the cries and tears of these oppressed will be regarded by you; and that your wisdom, and the great influence you have in these colonies, will be so properly and effectually exerted, as to bring about a total abolition of slavery, in such a manner as shall gently promote the happiness of these oppressed strangers, and best interest of the public.

These

There are many difficulties and obstacles, we are sensible, in the way of this good work : but when the propriety, importance, and necessity of it, come into view, we think ourselves warranted to address you, in the words spoken to Ezra, on an occasion not wholly dissimilar. ' Arise : for this matter belongeth unto you ; we also will be with you : be of good courage and do it.'

The righteous and merciful governor of the world has given the greatest encouragement to go on and thoroughly execute judgment, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, both in his word, and in the wonderful things he has done for us since we have began to reform this public iniquity. But if we stop here, what will be the consequence !

It is observable, that when the Swiss were engaged in their struggle for liberty, in which they were so remarkably succeeded, they entered into the following public resolve. " No Swiss shall take away any thing by violence from another, neither in time of war, nor peace. * " How reasonable and important is it that we should at this time heartily enter into, and thoroughly execute such a resolution ! And that this implies the emancipation of all our African slaves surely none can doubt.

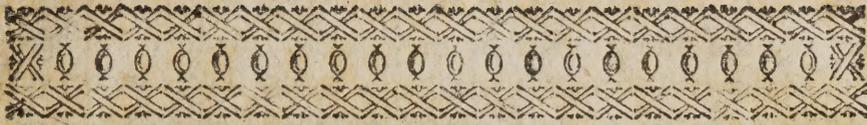
In this view, the following dialogue is humbly offered to your perusal, hoping that it may have your approbation and patronage.

May you judge the poor of the people, save the children of the needy, relieve the oppressed, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor ; and be the happy instruments of procuring and establishing universal LIBERTY to white and black, to be transmitted down to the latest posterity !

With high esteem, and the most friendly sentiments,
We are, honorable Gentlemen, your very
humble servants

The EDITORS,

* *Dr. ZUBLY'S Short Account, p. 41.*



A D I A L O G U E, &c.



A. SIR, What do you think of the motion made by some among us, to free all our *African* slaves?— They say, that our holding these blacks in slavery, as we do, is an open violation of the law of God, and is so great an instance of unrighteousness and cruelty, that we cannot expect deliverance from present calamities, and success in our struggle for liberty in the *American* colonies, until we repent, and make all the restitution in our power. For my part, I think they carry things much too far on this head; and if any thing might be done for the freedom of our slaves, this is not a proper time to attend to it, while we are in such a state of war and distress, and public affairs of much greater importance demand all our attention, and the utmost exertion of the public.

B. Sir, I am glad you have introduced this subject, especially, as you own a number of these slaves; I shall attend to it with pleasure, and offer my sentiments upon it freely, expecting you will as freely propose the objections you shall have against any thing I shall advance. And I take leave here to observe, that if the slavery in which we hold the blacks, is wrong; it is a very great and public sin; and therefore a sin which God is now testifying against in the calamities he has brought upon us, consequently must be reformed, before we can reasonably expect deliverance, or even sincerely ask for it. It would be worse than madness then, to put off attention to this matter under the notion of attending to more important affairs. This is acting like the mariner, who, when his leaky ship is filling with water, neglects to stop the leak

or ply the pump, that he may mend his sails. There are at the lowest computation, 800,000 slaves in *British America*, including the *West-India* islands; and above half a million of these are in the colonies on the continent. And if this is in every instance wrong, unrighteousness and oppression; it must be a very great and crying sin, there being nothing of the kind equal to it on the face of the earth. There are but few of these slaves indeed in *New-England*, compared with the vast numbers in the islands & the southern colonies; and they are treated much better on the continent, and especially among us, than they are in the *West-Indies*. But if it be all wrong, and real oppression of the poor helpless blacks, we, by refusing to break this yoke, and let these injured captives go free, do practically justify and support this slavery in general, and make ourselves, in a measure at least, answerable for the whole: and we have no way to exculpate ourselves from the guilt of the whole, and bear proper testimony against this great evil, but by freeing all our slaves. Surely then this matter admits of no delay, but demands our first, and most serious attention, and speedy reformation.

A. I acknowledge the *slave trade*, as it has been carried on with the *Africans*, cannot be justified. But I am not yet convinced that 'tis wrong to keep those in perpetual bondage, who by this trade have been transported from *Africa* to us, and are become our slaves. If I viewed this in the light you do, I should agree with you that 'tis of the highest importance that they should all be made free without delay; as we could not expect the favor of heaven, or with any consistency ask it, so long as they are held in bondage.

B. I am glad you have attended to the affair so much as to be convinced of the unrighteousness of the slave trade. Indeed, this conviction has been so spread of late, that it has reached almost all men on the continent, except some of those who are too deeply interested in it to admit

admit the light, which condemns it. And it has now but few advocates, I believe, being generally condemned and exploded. And the members of the continental congress have done themselves much honor, in advising the *American* colonies to drop this trade entirely; and resolving not to buy another slave, that shall be imported from *Africa*.

But I think it of importance that this trade should not only be condemned as wrong, but attentively considered in its real nature, and in all its shocking attendants and circumstances, which will lead us to think of it with a detestation and horror which this scene of inhumanity, oppression and cruelty, exceeding every thing of the kind that has ever been perpetrated by the sons of men, is suited to excite; and awaken us to a proper indignation against the authors of this violence and outrage done to their fellow men; and to feelings of humanity and pity towards our brethren, who are the miserable sufferers. Therefore, tho' I am not able to paint this horrid scene of barbarity and complicated iniquity, to the life, or even to tell the one half which may be told, in the short time allotted for this conversation; yet I will suggest a few particulars; leaving you, if you please, to consult the authors who have given a more particular description.

Most of the *Africans* are in a state of heathenism; and sunk down into that ignorance and barbarity, into which mankind naturally fall, when destitute of divine revelation. Their lands are fertile, and produce all the necessaries of life, the inhabitants are divided into many distinct nations or clans; and of course are frequently entering into quarrels, and open war with each other. The *Europeans*, *English*, *French*, *Dutch*, &c. have carried on a trade with them for above 100 years; and have taken advantage of their ignorance and barbarity, to persuade them to enter into the inhuman practice of selling one another

another to the *Europeans*, for the commodities which they carry to them, most of which, they stand in no real need of : but might live as well, or better without them : particularly spirituous liquors, which have been carried to them in great quantities, by the *Americans*. They by this means have tempted and excited the poor blacks to make war upon one another, in order to get captives, spreading distress, devastation and destruction over a vast country ; by which many millions have perished : and millions of others, have been captived, and sold to the *Europeans & Americans*, into a state of slavery, much worse than death. And the inhabitants of the towns near the sea, are taught to exert all the art and power they have to entrap and decoy one another, that they may make slaves of them, and sell them to us for rum, by which they intoxicate them selves, and become more brutish and savage than otherwise they could be, so that there are but few instances of sobriety, honesty, or even humanity, in these towns on the sea, to which the *Europeans* have access : and they who live the furthest from these places, are the least vicious, and much more civil and humane.

They stand in no need of the rum that is carried there in such vast quantities, by which so many thousands have been enslaved, and which has spread such infinite mischief among them. And I leave it with you to consider to what a dreadful degree the *Americans* have by this abominable practice, bro't the curse upon them, pronounced by an inspired prophet ; and how very applicable it is to this case. " Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour
 " drink : that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him
 " drunken also, that thou mayst look on their nakedness." *

And is not this curse evidently come upon us, in a dreadful degree, in such a way, as to paint itself out, so that he who runs may read it ? We have put the bottle to our neighbours mouths, by carrying immense quantities of rum to them, and inticed them to drink, that we might take ad-

* *Hab.* 2. 15.

vantage of their weakness, and thereby gratify our lusts. By this means multitudes of them have been enslaved, and carried to the *West-India* islands, there to be kept to hard labour, and treated ten thousand times worse than dogs. In consequence of which, incredible quantities of rum, and molasses which has been distilled into rum among ourselves, have been imported; the most of which is consumed in intemperance and drunkenness in such a dreadful degree, as to exceed any thing of the kind in any part of the world; by which thousands, yea millions, have ruined themselves, body and soul, forever. Let any one consider this, and forbear to confess, if he can, that this woe has fallen heavily upon us, and that in such a way and connection as to point out the sinful cause.

But to return. This trade has been carried on for a century and more, and for many years past, above an hundred thousand have been brought off the coast in a year, so that many, many millions have been torn from their native country, their acquaintance, relations and friends, and most of them put into a state of slavery, both themselves, and their children forever, if they shall have any posterity, much worse than death. When numbers of these wretched creatures are collected by the savages, they are bro't into the public market to be sold, all naked as they were born. The more than savage slave merchant views them, and sends his surgeon, more particularly to examine them, as to the soundness of their limbs, their age, &c. All that are passed as fit for sale, are branded with a hot iron in some part of their body, with the buyers mark; and then confined, crowded together in some close hold, till a convenient time to put them on board a ship. When they are bro't on board, all are immediately put in irons, except some of the women perhaps, and the small children, where they are so crowded together in that hot climate, that commonly a considerable number die on their passage to the *West-Indies*, occasioned

partly by their confinement, partly by the grief and vexation of their minds, from the treatment they receive, and the situation in which they find themselves. And a number commonly die after they arrive at the *West-Indies*, in seasoning to the climate, so that commonly not above seventy in an hundred survive their transportation; by which means about thirty thousand are murdered every year by this slave trade, which amounts to three millions in a century. When they are brought to the *West-Indies*, they are again exposed to market, as if they were so many beasts, and sold to the highest bidder; where again they are separated according to the humour of the traders, without any regard to their friendships or relations, of husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, &c. being torn from each other, without the least regard to any thing of this kind, and sent to different places, without any prospect of seeing each other again. They are then put under task-masters, by the purchasing planter, who appoints them their work, and rules over them with rigor and cruelty, following them with his cruel whip, or appointing one to do it, if possible, more cruel than himself. The infirm and feeble, the females, and even those who are pregnant, or have infants to take care of, must do their task in the field equally with the rest; or if they fall behind, may be sure to feel the lash of their unmerciful driver. Their allowance of food at the same time is very coarse and scant, and must be cooked by themselves, if cooked at all, when they want to be asleep. And often they have no food but what they procure for themselves, by working on the sabbath; for that is the only time they have to themselves. And to make any complaint, or petition for relief, will expose them to some severe punishment, if not a cruel death. The least real or supposable crimes in them, are punished in the most cruel manner. And they have no relief; there being no appeal from their masters sentence and will, who commonly

monly are more like savage beasts, than rational, humane creatures. And to petition for liberty, tho' in the most humble and modest terms, is as much as their lives are worth ; as few escape the most cruel death, who presume to hint any thing of this kind to their masters : It being a maxim with those more than cruel tyrants, that the only way to keep them under, and prevent their thinking of the sweets of liberty, is to punish the least intimation of it in the severest manner, as the most intolerable affront and insult on their masters. Their labour is so hard, and their diet so scant and poor, and they are treated in all respects with such oppression and cruelty, that they do not increase by propagation in the islands, but constantly decrease, so that every planter must every year at least purchase five to every hundred he has on his plantation, in order to keep his number from diminishing.

But it is in vain to attempt a full description of the oppression and cruel treatment these poor creatures receive constantly at the hands of their imperious, unmerciful, worse than *Egyptian* taskmasters. Words cannot alter it. Volumes might be wrote, and not give a detail of a thousandth part of the shockingly cruel things they have suffered, and are constantly suffering. Nor can they possibly be conceived of by any one, who has not been an eye witness. And how little a part does he see ! They who are witnesses to any part of this horrid scene of barbarous oppression, cannot but feel the truth and propriety of *Solomon's* words. " So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun : and behold the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter ; and on the side of the oppressors there was power ; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead, which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive : " * *Solomon* never saw any oppression like this, unless he looked forward to this very instance, in the spirit of prophecy.

* *Ecc.* 4. 1, 2.

A. Sir, There is one important circumstance in favor of the slave trade ; or which will at least serve to counterballance many of the evils you mention, and that is, we bring these slaves from a heathen land, to places of gospel light ; and so put them under special advantages to be saved.

B. I know this has been mentioned by many in favor of the slave trade ; but when examined, will turn greatly against it. It can hardly be said with truth, that the *West-India* islands are places of gospel-light. But if they were, are the negroes in the least benefitted by it ? Have they any access to the gospel ? Have they the least instruction, more than if they were beasts ? So far from this, that their masters guard against their having any instruction to their utmost ; and if any one would attempt any such thing, it would be at the risk of his life. And all the poor creatures learn of Christianity, from what they see in those who call themselves Christians, only serves to prejudice them to the highest degree against the Christian religion. For they not only see the abominably wicked lives of most of those who are called Christians ; but are constantly oppressed by them, and receive as cruel treatment from them, as they could from the worst of beings. And as to those who are brought to the continent, in the southern colonies, and even to *New-England*, so little pains are taken to instruct them, and there is so much to prejudice them against Christianity, that it is a very great wonder, and owing to an extraordinary divine interposition, in which we may say, God goes out of his common way, that any of them should think favorably of Christianity, and cordially embrace it. As to the most of them, no wonder they are unteachable, and get no good by the gospel ; but have imbibed the deepest prejudices against it, from the treatment they receive from professed Christians ; prejudices which most of them are by their circumstances restrain-

ed from expressing; while they are fixed in the strongest degree in their minds.

But if this was not the case, and all the slaves brought from *Africa*, were put under the best advantages to become Christians, and they were in circumstances that tended to give them the most favorable idea of Christians, and the religion they profess;* and tho' all concerned in this trade, and in slavery in general, should have this wholly in view, viz. their becoming Christians, by which they should be eternally happy; yet this would not justify the slave-trade, or continuing them in a state of slavery: For to take this method to christianize them, would be a direct and gross violation of the laws of Christ. He commands us to go and preach the gospel to all nations; to carry the gospel to them, and not to go, and with violence bring them from their native country, without saying a word to them, or to the nations from whom they are taken, about the gospel, or any thing that relates to it.

If the *Europeans* and *Americans* had been as much engaged to christianize the *Africans*, as they have been to enslave them; and had been at half the cost and pains to introduce the gospel among them, that they have to captivate and destroy them; we have all the reason in the world to conclude that extensive country, containing such a vast multitude of inhabitants, would have been full of gospel light, and the many nations there, civilized and made happy; and a foundation laid for the salvation of millions of millions; and the happy instruments of it have been rewarded ten thousand fold for all their labour and expence. But now, instead of this, what has been done on that coast, by those who pass among the Negroes

for

* Which cannot be the case, so long as they are held in a state of slavery, or they brought away from their native country in the manner they are; so that the supposition is inconsistent, and destroys itself.

for Christians, † has only served to produce and spread the greatest and most deep-rooted prejudices against the Christian religion, and bar the way to that which is above all things desirable, their coming to the knowledge of the truth that they might be saved. So that while, by the murdering or enslaving millions of millions, they have brought a curse on themselves, and on all that partake with them, they have injured in the highest degree innumerable nations, and done what they could to prevent their salvation, and to fasten them down in ignorance and barbarity to the latest posterity!—Who can realize all this, and not feel a mixture of grief, pity, indignation and horror, truly ineffable! And must he not be filled with zeal to do his utmost to put a speedy stop to this seven-headed monster of iniquity, with all the horrid train of evils with which it is attended,

And can any one consider all these things, and yet pretend to justify the slave-trade, or the slavery of the *Africans in America*? Is it not impossible, that a real Christian, who has attended to all this, should have any hand in this trade? And it requires the utmost stretch of charity to suppose that any one ever did, or can buy or sell an *African* slave, with a sincere view to make a true Christian of him.

A. All this seems to be little to the purpose; since it was granted in the beginning of our conversation, that the slave-trade, as it has been carried on, is not to be justified. But what is this to the question we proposed to consider; which is, Whether it be wrong to hold the blacks we have among us in a state of slavery, or ought to set them free without delay? To this you have said little or nothing as yet.

B. All

† For they have no way to get an idea of a Christian, but from the appearance and conduct of the Europeans or Americans, in the practice of all their unrighteousness, cruelty, profaneness and debauchery.

B. All I have said upon the slave-trade, to shew the unrighteousness, the cruelty, the murder, the opposition to Christianity and the spread of the gospel among the Africans, the destruction of whole nations, and myriads of souls, which are contained in this horrid practice, has been principally with a view to a more clear and satisfactory determination of the question before us, which you have now renewedly proposed.—For I think the following proposition may be advanced as undeniable; viz. *If the slave-trade is unjustifiable and wrong; then our holding the Africans and their children in bondage, is unjustifiable and wrong; and the latter is criminal in some proportion to the inexpressible baseness and criminality of the former.* For,

FIRST, If they have been brought into a state of slavery, by unrighteousness and violence; they having never forfeited their liberty, or given any one a right to enslave and sell them; then purchasing them of these piratical tyrants, and holding them in the same state of bondage into which they, contrary to all right, have brought them, is continuing the exercise of the same unrighteousness and violence towards them. They have yet as much a right to their liberty as ever they had, and to demand it of him who holds them in bondage; and he denies them their right, which is of more worth to them than every thing else they can have in the world, or all the riches the unjust master does or can possess; and therefore injures them in a very high degree every hour he refuses or neglects to set them at liberty. Besides,

SECONDLY, Holding these blacks in a state of slavery, is a practical justification of the slave-trade, and so brings the guilt of that on the head of him, who so far partakes in this iniquity, as to hold *one* of these a slave, who was unrighteously made so by these sons of violence. The old adage, "The partaker is as bad as the thief," carries such a plain truth in it, that every one must discern it: And it is certainly applicable to this case.

'Tis

'Tis impossible to buy one of these blacks and detain him a slave, without partaking with him who first reduced him to this state, and put it in his power thus to possess him ; and practically justifying him for so doing, so as to bring upon himself the guilt of first enslaving him. It is not therefore possible for any of our *slave keepers* to justify themselves in what they are doing, unless they can justify the slave trade : If they fail here, they bring on themselves an awful degree of the guilt of the whole.

Thirdly, By keeping these slaves, and buying and selling them, they actually encourage and promote the slave trade : And therefore, in this view, keeping slaves, and continuing to buy and sell them, is to bring on us the guilt of the slave trade, which is hereby supported. For so long as slaves are bought and possessed, and in demand ; so long the *African* trade will be supported and encouraged.

A. But there is a stop put to the importation of slaves into the *American* colonies, as they have resolved no more shall be bought. This being the case, the keeping those we have among us in slavery, is no encouragement to the slave trade.

B. I grant, if this resolution should be perpetual, and extend to the *West-Indies*, it would discourage the slave trade ; so far as the *Americans* are concerned in it : But it would be more effectually discountenanced and condemned, if slavery was wholly abolished ; and it cannot be consistently done without this. For if it be wrong to import and buy them *now*, it was *always* wrong ; and therefore they that are already slaves among us, are injured, and unjustly enslaved ; and we have made them our slaves without the least right ; and ought to retract it, and repair the injury done to them, so far as is in our power, by setting them free, and compensating them otherwise, so far as we are able. There is therefore a
palpable

palpable inconsistency in resolving to import and buy no more slaves; and yet refusing to let those go out free, which we have already enslaved, unless there be some insuperable impediment in the way.

The whole I have said concerning the unlawfulness of keeping the blacks in slavery, if the trade by which they are become our slaves is unlawful, may be illustrated by the following example.

A number of robbers invaded a certain province, and took off most of their goods and effects, and carried them to a neighbouring province, and sold them to the inhabitants; and the robbers finding this encouragement, continued the practice for many years. At length the people of the injured province applied to their neighbours, who had their goods of the robbers, and were now in possession of them, and asked them to restore what was taken from them by violence, and to which they had a good and indisputable right; it being impossible these robbers could give a right to what they had unjustly taken from them. But the people in whose possession the stolen goods were found, utterly refused to deliver them up to the injured people who demanded them. They told them, they had indeed been greatly injured, and they must condemn the robbers as very injurious and cruel in what they had done: But as they now had these goods in their own possession, they intended to keep them, and looked on themselves under no obligation to deliver them up, tho' they suffered so much, and would probably perish for want of them. And they intended still to buy all the robbers should bring to them.

To this the injured replied, ' By partaking with these robbers in receiving the goods at their hands, you practically justify their conduct, and must share with them in their guilt. For by this means you encourage them, and are determined to go on to encourage them in this violence and rapine: And by condemning them, you

‘ equally condemn yourselves, and must remain under this
 ‘ condemnation till you restore the goods we demand ;
 ‘ and resolve never to purchase any thus taken from us
 ‘ by violence.’

Upon this they determined to purchase no more of them, but refused to deliver up what they had already got in possession. But the oppressed told them, they did right in resolving to injure them no more in that way ; but they were now very inconsistent with themselves ; for if it were wrong to purchase any more, it was as wrong to withhold what they had already got in possession : And they had no other way to justify themselves in detaining their goods, and to be consistent, but by proceeding to take whatever those robbers should bring to them in future, and justifying themselves in so doing, and the robbers in all their depredations.

A. This reasoning looks something plausible, I confess ; but the holy scripture approves of making and keeping slaves ; and this surely is sufficient to keep us in countenance.

B. I hope you will not appeal to the holy scripture, in support of a practice, which you and every one else must allow to be so inexpressibly unjust, inhumane and cruel, as is the slave-trade ; and consequently so glaringly contrary to the whole tenor of divine revelation. And if the slave-trade is such a gross violation of every divine precept, 'tis impossible to vindicate the slavery to which the *Africans* have been reduced by this trade, from the holy scripture. Of this we have such a certainty *a priori*, that it would be a horrid reproach of divine revelation, to pretend this practice can be supported by that ; or even to look into it with any hope or expectation of finding any thing there in favor of it. And if there are any passages in the bible, which are capable of a construction in favor of this practice, we may be very certain it is a wrong one. In a word, if any kind of slavery can be
 vindi-

vindicated by the holy scriptures, we are already sure our making and holding the Negroes our slaves, as we do, cannot be vindicated by any thing we can find there; but is condemned by the whole of divine revelation. However, I am willing to hear what you can produce from scripture, in favor of any kind of slavery.

A. You know that a curse was pronounced on the posterity of *Ham*, for his wickedness, in the following words, *A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.* He could not be a servant unto his brethren, unless they made him so; or at least held him in servitude. The curse could not take place unless they executed it, and they seem to be by God appointed to do this. Therefore while we, the children of *Japheth*, are making such abject slaves of the blacks, the children of *Ham*, we are only executing the righteous curse denounced upon them; which is so far from being wrong in us, that it would be a sin, even disobedience to the revealed will of God, to refuse to make slaves of them, and attempt to set them at liberty.

B. Do you think, my good Sir, it was the duty of *Pharaoh* to make the *Israelites* serve him and the *Egyptians*, and to afflict them, by ruling over them with rigor, and holding them in hard and cruel bondage, because God had expressly foretold this, and said it should be done? And was the *Assyrian* king blameless while he executed the judgments which God had threatened to inflict on his professing people? Did God's threatening them with those evils, warrant this king to distress, captivate and destroy them, as he did? And will you say, the *Jews* did right in crucifying our Lord, because by this they fulfilled the scriptures, declaring that thus it must be?—Your argument, if it is of any force, will assert and justify all this; and therefore, I hope, will be renounced by you, and by all who have the least regard to the holy scripture, with proper abhorrence.

But

But if this argument were not so fraught with absurdity and impiety as it really is, and it were granted to be forcible, with respect to all upon whom the mentioned curse was denounced; yet it would not justify our enslaving the *Africans*, for they are not the posterity of *Canaan*, who was the only son of *Ham* that was doomed to be a servant of servants. The other sons of *Ham*, and their posterity, are no more affected with this curse, than the other sons of *Noah*, and their posterity. Therefore this prediction is as much of a warrant for the *Africans* enslaving us, as it is for us to make slaves of them. The truth is, it gives not the least shadow of a right to any one of the children of *Noah* to make slaves of any of their brethren.*

A. The people of *Israel* were allowed by God to buy and make slaves from the nations that were round about them, and the strangers that lived among them; which could not have been the case, if this was wrong and unjust. And why have not we an equal right to do the same?

B.—And why have we not an equal right to invade any nation and land, as they did the land of *Canaan*, and destroy them all, men, women and children, and beasts, without saving so much as one alive? It was right for the *Israelites* to do this, because they had a divine permission and direction to do it, as the God of *Israel* had a right to destroy the seven nations of *Canaan* in what way he

* If it should be asked, Why *Canaan* should be singled out from the other sons of *Ham*, and cursed for the sins of his father? May we not conclude that the curse fell on all *Ham's* posterity, and that *Canaan* only is mentioned, as including all the rest? It must be answered, No, by no means. We have no warrant to do this. The father sinned; and God might justly have cursed all his posterity. But in his wisdom and sovereign goodness, he cursed only one branch of the family. And how effectually this has taken place, the scripture informs us.

he thought best, and to direct whom he pleased to do it. And it was right for them to make bond servants of the nations round them, they having an express permission to do it, from him who has a right to dispose of all men as he pleases. God saw fit, for wise reasons, to allow the people of *Israel* thus to make and possess slaves; but is this any licence to us to enslave any of our fellow men, any more than their being allowed to kill the seven nations in *Canaan*, is a warrant to us to kill any of our fellow men, whom we please, and are able to destroy, and take possession of their estates? This must be answered in the negative, by every one who will allow himself a moment's reflection. God gave many directions and laws to the *Jews*, which had no respect to mankind in general; and this under consideration has all the marks of such an one. There is not any thing in it, or relating to it, from whence can be deduced the least evidence that it was designed to be a regulation for all nations thro' every age of the world; but every thing to the contrary. The children of *Israel* were then distinguished from all other nations on earth; they were God's peculiar people, and favored on many accounts above others; and had many things in their constitution and laws that were designed to keep up their separation and distinction from other nations, and to make the special favor of heaven towards them more apparent to all who had any knowledge of them. And this law respecting bondage, is suited to answer these ends. This distinction is now at an end, and all nations are put upon a level; and Christ, who has taken down the wall of separation, has taught us to look on all nations as our neighbours and brethren, without any respect of persons, and to love all men as ourselves, and do to others as we would they should treat us; by which he has most effectually abolished this permission given to the *Jews*, as well as many other institutions, which were peculiar to them.

Besides,

Besides, that this permission was not designed for all nations and ages, will be very evident, if we consider what such a supposition implies : For if this be so, then all other nations had a right to make slaves of the *Jews*. The *Egyptians* had a right to buy and sell them, and keep them all in bondage forever. And the nations round about *Canaan*, had a right to bring them into bondage, as they sometimes did. And the *Babylonians* and *Romans* had a good warrant to reduce them to a state of captivity and servitude. And the *Africans* have a good right to make slaves of us and our children. The inhabitants of *Great-Britain* may lawfully make slaves of all the *Americans*, and transport us to *England*, and buy and sell us in open market, as they do their cattle and horses, and perpetuate our bondage to the latest generation. And the *Turks* have a good right to all the Christian slaves they have among them ; and to make as many more slaves of us and our children, as shall be in their power ; and to hold them and their children in bondage to the latest posterity. According to this, every man has a warrant to make a bond slave of his neighbour, whenever it lies in his power ; and no one has any right to his own freedom, any longer than he can keep himself out of the power of others. For instance, if the blacks now among us, should by some remarkable providence have the power in their hands to reduce us, they have a right to make us and our children their slaves ; and we should have no reason to complain.

This would put mankind into such a state of perpetual war and confusion, and is so contrary to our loving our neighbour as ourselves, that he who has the least regard for his fellow-men, or the divine law, must reject it, and the principle from which it flows, with the greatest abhorrence. Let no *Christian* then, plead this permission to the *Jews* to make bond slaves of their neighbours, as a warrant to hold the slaves he has made, and consequently for universal slavery.

A. But

A. But what will you do with those passages in the new testament, which are in favor of slavery, and suppose christian masters to have christian slaves; and the masters are so far from being directed to free them, that 'tis supposed they may hold them in bondage; and their mutual duties in this relation are inculcated. *Paul* the Apostle is so far from being disposed to have servants made free, that he says, *Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honor!** And in the following words supposes that *believing masters* had servants, whom he exhorts to serve such masters with the more chearfulness, out of respect to their christian character.

B. Before I make a direct answer to this, I beg leave to remind you, that whatever other kind of slavery these passages will vindicate, they certainly will not support the slave-trade, and that slavery of the negroes into which they have been brought by this trade, which is manifestly unrighteous from beginning to end; and therefore can be nothing to our present purpose, v.z. to justify christian masters among us in holding the blacks and their children in bondage.

I grant there are bond servants who are made so, and may be held in this state, consistent with justice, humanity, and benevolence. They are such, who have forfeited their liberty to the community of which they are members, by some particular crimes, and by debt in some instances: and are for this condemned to servitude for a longer or shorter time, and sold by the civil magistrate. And persons may put themselves into this state by their own voluntary act. There were doubtless such in the Apostle's days; and if master and servant, in this case, were converted to christianity, the servant would still be under the yoke, and the Apostle's exhortation highly proper. Therefore if every master, when he embraced christianity, was obliged to free all his servants who had

* 1 Tim. 6. 1.

not evidently forfeited their liberty, and not one who refused to do this, was admitted into a christian church; yet there might be many masters and servants in the first christian churches: And the passages of scripture under consideration prove no more than this: And therefore will not justify any master holding one servant in bondage against his will so much as an hour, who has not evidently brought himself into this state by his own crimes, and been adjudged to it, after proper trial by the civil magistrate. These scriptures therefore are infinitely far from justifying the slavery under consideration, for it cannot be made to appear that one in a thousand of these slaves has done any thing to forfeit his own liberty. And if there were any such, they have never been condemned to slavery by any who are proper judges, or had any authority to act in the affair. But if this were the case of any, they certainly could not forfeit the liberty of their children, and cause them to be born slaves.

But it may be further observed, that it might be difficult in many cases at that day, to determine what servants were justly in a state of bondage, and who had a right to their liberty (which is not the case with respect to the slaves whose cause I am now pleading). And the apostles did not think it their business to examine into every instance of slavery, and find the original ground of it, in order to determine, whether the servant ought to be set free or not; and as it was taken for granted by all, or most, that the slavery which then took place, was generally just: And if every one who embraced Christianity, and had slaves must undergo a strict examination, and be obliged to dismiss his servants, unless he could produce good evidence that they had forfeited their liberty; this, as circumstances then were, would have greatly prejudiced the world against the Christian religion and tended to retard its propagation: I say, considering all these things, the apostles might be directed not to intermeddle in this
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affair, so far as to enquire into every instance of slavery, whether it was just or not; but to treat it as if it were so, unless there was particular, positive evidence of the contrary in any instances; only giving general rules for the direction and conduct of masters and servants, which if applied and put into practice, would not only render this relation comfortable, where it ought to subsist; but would effect the liberty of all the servants, who were evidently reduced to that state unjustly; and were suited to put an end to slavery in general. Thus the apostle *Paul*, speaking to masters, says, *Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.** The master who conformed to this rule, must not only treat his servants with equity, in all instances; but must set at liberty all who were evidently unjustly enslaved, and therefore had a right to their freedom. And if any christian master refused to do this, he would bring upon him the censure of the church, for disregarding this apostolic rule. § And the same apostle says to the servants, *If thou mayest be made free, use it rather?* † In these words it is declared, that slavery is, in itself considered undesirable; and a calamity, in every instance of it; and therefore that it ought to be avoided & abolished, as far as possible. And not only the servant is warranted and commanded to desire and seek to be made free; but the master is also implicitly required to set him at liberty, if there be no insuperable impediment in the way: for if the servant ought to desire and attempt to obtain his freedom, the master ought to desire it also, and assist him to obtain it, if it can be effected; and will do it, if he loves his servant, as himself: And the church to which the servant belongs, and every member of it, ought to do all in their power to procure the freedom of every servant; for will any one say they ought not to do their utmost in assisting their poor suffering brother to obtain his liberty, which God has commanded him to desire and seek? This apostolic command therefore,

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* *Col. 4. 1.*§ *2 Thef. 3. 6.*† *1 Cor. 7. 21.*

being properly regarded, would soon put an end to most instances of slavery in the Christian church, if it did not wholly abolish it; especially at this day, when many of the impediments in the way of freeing slaves, which were in the apostles days, are removed. And it may be left to the consciences of all slave-holders among us, whether, if it had been left to them, such a direction and command would ever have been given to any servant whatever, as is here given by the apostle; and whether, now it is given, they approve of it, and practice accordingly. So far from it, that most of them, even professing Christians, hold their servants at such a distance, and treat them in such a manner, that the poor servant dare not so much as treat with his master about his freedom; and if he should say a word, is pretty sure to receive nothing but angry frowns, if he should escape blows. And if any one undertakes to plead the cause of these oppressed poor, whose right is turned aside in the gale, and they have no helper, he may expect to feel the resentment of almost every keeper of slaves, who knows him. And is there one church now in this land, who are ready to do what is in their power to obtain the freedom of the slaves which belong to them; or are willing calmly to consider and debate the question among themselves, whether it be right to hold the negroes in bondage? Where is the church that has done any thing of this kind? And how few churches to be found, that would not be greatly disturbed, and filled with resentment, if the question were seriously proposed, and urged to be considered!

Let none who are conscious all this is true, urge the apostle *Paul's* authority in favor of the slave-keeping which is practised in *British America*.

But to return. The apostle seems to have conducted in this case, as he did in that of civil government. He considered this as a divine institution, and pointed out the end and design of it, and the duty of civil rulers,
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and of the subject, without particularly applying it to the government Christians were then under, so as expressly to justify or condemn the particular form of government that then took place; or the conduct of those who then had the civil authority in their hands; and that for very obvious reasons, grounded on the state and circumstances of the church and of public affairs at that day. We may as well infer from this, that the civil governors of that day were not unjust and tyrannical, which is most contrary to known fact, as we can that the slavery which then took place was in general just and right, from his pointing out the duties of masters and servants, without mentioning and condemning any particular instances of unjust slavery.

A. You well observed that the apostles did not intermeddle with the affair of slavery, so as to condemn masters for holding their slaves; or tell the servants their masters had no right to keep them in bondage; but ought to free them, &c. I wish all were as wise and prudent now; especially ministers of the gospel: But all are not so. Many make such a clamour about holding our negroes in bondage; and some ministers have of late said so much in public about freeing our slaves; and have so inveighed against the *African* slave-trade, and even keeping our blacks in slavery, that many of the negroes are become very uneasy, and are much more engaged to obtain their liberty than they used to be.

I think, if any thing be said on this subject, it should be in private; and not a word of this kind should be whispered in the hearing of our servants; much less ought ministers to say any thing about it in public, lest the blacks should all take it in their heads that they are treated hardly, and never be easy till they are set at liberty.

B.— It has been observed, there were reasons, peculiar to the state of things at that time, why the apostles should not be so particular on this head: which reasons

do not take place now. The slavery that now takes place is in a christian land, and without the express sanction of civil government; And it is all of the same kind, and from one original; which is most notoriously unjust; and if it be unrighteous in one instance, it is so in almost every instance; and the unrighteousness of it is most apparent, and most masters have no colour of claim to hold their servants in bondage. And this is become a general and crying sin; for which we are under the awful frowns of heaven. These things, which make the case so different from the slavery which took place in the apostles days, may be a good reason of a different conduct; and make it duty to oppose, and bear testimony, both in public, and more privately, against this evil practice, which is so evidently injurious to individuals, and threatens our ruin as a people.

As to making servants uneasy, and desirous of liberty, &c. I would observe, that most of them do not want to be informed that they are greatly injured and oppressed; that they are reduced to a state of slavery, without the least colour of justice. They have sense and discerning enough to be sensible of this, without being told; and they think much of it almost every day, tho' they are obliged to keep it to themselves, having none to pity them, or so much as hear their complaints. They have a thousand times more discerning and sensibility in this case than their masters, or most others. And their aversion to slavery, and desires of liberty, are inextinguishable. Therefore their hearing it asserted that they ought to be set at liberty, gives them no new light and conviction, except it be, that he who asserts it, has some discerning of what they have long known, and most sensibly felt; and has courage enough to assert that in their favor, which they have long felt the truth of; but dared not so much as list it out.—But if by this means any of your servants should be more fully convinced of their right to liberty,

liberty, and the injustice done them in making them slaves, will this be such a dreadful evil? Would you desire they should be held in ignorance, that you may exercise your tyranny, without opposition or trouble from any quarter? As reasonably might *Pharaoh* be angry, and complain of *Moses* and *Aaron*, for saying a word to those whom he had reduced to slavery, about their cruel bondage, and their obtaining their liberty.

It has always been the way of tyrants to take great pains to keep their vassals in ignorance, especially to hide from them the tyranny and oppression of which they are the subjects. And for this reason they are enemies to the liberty of the press, and are greatly provoked when their conduct is set in a true light before the public, and the unrighteousness they practice, properly exposed. - The complaint we are now considering, seems to be of the same kind with this, & well becomes all those petty tyrants, who have slaves in their possession, which they are conscious they cannot vindicate, but the unrighteousness will be detected, if free enquiry and freedom of speech cannot be suppressed. And this complaint is of the same kind with the conduct of the masters of slaves in the *West-Indies*, in opposing their being taught any thing of christianity, because they know every gleam of this light carries a discovery of the unrighteousness of the treatment they receive.

The present situation of our public affairs, and our struggle for liberty, and the abundant conversation ths occasions in all companies; while the poor negroes look on and hear, what an aversion we have to slavery, and how much liberty is prized; they often hearing it declared publicly and in private, as the voice of all, that slavery is more to be dreaded than death, and we are resolved to live free or die, &c. &c. This, I say, necessarily leads them to attend to their own wretched situation, more than otherwise they could. They see themselves deprived of
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all liberty and property, and their children after them, to the latest posterity, subjected to the will of those who appear to have no feeling for their misery, and are guilty of many instances of hard heartedness and cruelty towards them, while they think themselves very kind; and therefore to make the least complaint, would be deemed the height of arrogance and abuse: And often, if they have a comparatively good master now, with constant dread they see a young one growing up, who bids fair to rule over them, or their children, with rigour.

They see the slavery the *Americans* dread as worse than death, is lighter than a feather, compared to their heavy doom; and may be called liberty and happiness, when contrasted with the most abject slavery and unutterable wretchedness to which they are subjected. And in this dark and dreadful situation, they look round, and find none to help—no pity—no hope! And when they observe all this cry and struggle for liberty for ourselves and children; and see themselves and their children wholly overlooked by us, and behold the *sons of liberty*, oppressing and tyrannizing over many thousands of poor blacks, who have as good a claim to liberty as themselves, they are shocked with the glaring inconsistency, and wonder they themselves do not see it. You must not therefore lay it to the few who are pleading the cause of these friendless distressed poor, that they are more uneasy than they used to be, in a sense of their wretched state, and from a desire of liberty; there is a more mighty and irresistible cause than this, viz. all that passes before them in our public struggle for liberty.

And why should the ministers of the gospel hold their peace, and not testify against this great and public iniquity, which we have reason to think, is one great cause of the public calamities we are now under? How can they refuse to plead the cause of these oppressed poor, against the cruel oppressor? They are commanded to lift up
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their voice, and cry aloud, and shew the people their sins, &c. Have we not reason to fear many of them have offended heaven by their silence thro' fear of the masters, who stand ready to make war against any one who attempts to deprive them of their slaves; or because they themselves have slaves, which they are not willing to give up?

Might they not fully expose this iniquity, and bear a constant testimony against it, in such a manner as would have no tendency to influence one servant to behave ill in any respect; by giving them at the same time proper cautions and directions?

A. It is impossible to free all our negroes; especially at once, and in present circumstances, without injuring them, at least, many of them, and the public, to a great degree. Why then is this urged so vehemently now? I think this proceeds from a zeal, not according to knowledge.

B. If it be not a sin, an open flagrant violation of all the rules of justice and humanity, to hold these slaves in bondage, it is indeed folly to put ourselves to any trouble and expence, in order to free them. But if the contrary be true; if it be a sin of a crimson die, which is most particularly pointed out by the public calamities which have come upon us, from which we have no reason to expect deliverance till we put away the evil of our doings, this reformation cannot be urged with too much zeal, nor attempted too soon, whatever difficulties are in the way. The more and greater these are, the more zealous and active should we be in removing them. You had need to take care, lest from selfish motives, and a backwardness to give up what you unrighteously retain, you are joining with the slothful man to cry, *there is a lion in the way! A lion is in the streets!* * While there is no insurmountable difficulties, but that which lies in your own heart.

* *Prov. 26. 13.*

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No wonder there are many and great difficulties in reforming an evil practice of this kind, which has got such deep root by length of time, and is become so common. But it does not yet appear that they cannot be removed, by the united wisdom and strength of the *American* colonies, without any injury to the slaves, or disadvantage to the public. Yea, the contrary is most certain, as the slaves cannot be put into a more wretched situation, ourselves being judges, and the community cannot take a more likely step to escape ruin, and obtain the smiles and protection of heaven. This matter ought doubtless to be attended to by the general assemblies, and continental and provincial congresses; and if they were as much united and engaged in devising ways and means to let at liberty these injured slaves as they are to defend themselves from tyranny, it would soon be effected. There were without doubt many difficulties and impediments in the way of the *Jews* liberating those of their brethren they had brought into bondage, in the days of *Jeremiah*. But when they were besieged by the *Chaldeans*, and this their sin was laid before them, and they were threatened with desolation if they did not reform: They broke thro' every difficulty, and set their servants at liberty.

And how great must have been the impediments, how many the seeming unanswerable objections, against reforming that gross violation of the divine command in *Ezra's* time, by their marrying strange wives of which so many of the *Jews* were guilty, and the hand of the princes and rulers had been chief in this trespass! Yet the pious zeal of *Ezra* and those who joined with him, and their wisdom and indefatigable efforts conquered every obstacle, and brought them to a thorough reformation. Would not the like zeal, wisdom and resolution, think you, soon produce a reformation of this much greater abomination, by finding out an effectual method to put away all our slaves? Surely we have no reason to con-

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clude it cannot be done, till we see a suitable zeal and resolution, among all orders of men, and answerable attempts are thoroughly made.

Let this iniquity be viewed in it's true magnitude, and in the shocking light in which it has been set in this conversation ; let the wretched case of the poor blacks be considered with proper pity and benevolence ; together with the probable dreadful consequence to this land, of retaining them in bondage, and all objections against liberating them would vanish. The mountains that are now raised up in the imagination of many, would become a plain, and every difficulty surmounted.

Pharaoh and the *Egyptians*, could not bear to think of letting the *Hebrews* go out free from the bondage to which they had reduced them ; and it may be presumed, they had as many and as weighty objections against it, as can be thought of against freeing the slaves among us. Yet they were at length brought to drop them all, and willingly to send them out free, and to be ready to part with any thing they had, in order to promote it.*

If many thousands of our children were slaves in *Algiers*, or any parts of the *Turkish* dominions, and there were but few families in the *American* colonies that had not some child, or near relation in that sad state, without any hope of freedom to them, or their children, unless there were some extraordinary exertion of the colonies to effect it ; how would the attention of all the country be turned to it ! How greatly should we be affected with it ! Would it not become the chief topic of conversation ?

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* It may be well worthy our serious consideration, whether we have not reason to fear the hand of God, which is now stretched out against us, will lie upon us, and the strokes grow heavier, unless we reform this iniquity, so clearly pointed out by the particular manner in which God is correcting us ; and whether we have any reason to hope or pray for deliverance, till this reformation takes place.

Would any cost or labour be spared, or any difficulty or hazard be too great to go through, in order to obtain their freedom? If there were no greater difficulties than there are in the case before us; yea, if they were ten times greater, would they not be soon surmounted, as very inconsiderable! I know you, Sir, and every one else, *must* answer in the affirmative, without hesitation. And why are we not as much affected with the slavery of the many thousands of blacks among ourselves, whose miserable state is before our eyes? And why should we not be as much engaged to relieve them? The reason is obvious. 'Tis because they are *Negroes*, and fit for nothing but slaves; and we have been used to look on them in a mean, contemptible light; and our education has filled us with strong prejudices against them, and led us to consider them, not as our brethren, or in any degree on a level with us; but as quite another species of animals, made only to serve us and our children; and as happy in bondage, as in any other state. This has banished all attention to the injustice that is done them, and any proper sense of their misery, or the exercise of benevolence towards them. If we could only divest ourselves of these strong prejudices, which have insensibly fixed on our minds, and consider them as, by nature, and by right, on a level with our brethren and children, and those of our neighbours, and had that benevolence, which loves our neighbour as ourselves, and is agreeable to truth and righteousness, we should begin to feel towards them, in some measure at least, as we should towards our children and neighbours in the case above supposed, and be as much engaged for their relief.

If parents have a son pressed on board a king's ship, how greatly are they affected with it! They are filled with grief and distress, and will cheerfully be at almost any cost and pains to procure his liberty: and we wonder not at it, but think their exercises and engagedness
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for his deliverance very just, and stand ready to condemn him who has no feelings for them and their son, and is not ready to afford all the assistance in his power, in order to recover him. At the same time we behold vast numbers of blacks among us, torn from their native country, and all their relations, not to serve on board a man of war for a few years, but to be abject, despised slaves for life, and their children after them; and yet have not the least feelings for them, or desire of their freedom! These very parents perhaps, have a number of Negro slaves, on whom they have not the least pity; and stand ready highly to resent it, if any one espouses their cause so much as to propose they should be set at liberty. What reason for this partiality? Ought this so to be? An impartial person, who is not under the prejudices of interest, education and custom, is shocked with it beyond all expression. The poor Negroes have sense enough to see and feel it, but have no friend to speak a word for them; none to whom they may complain.

It has been observed, that if the general assemblies, &c. of these *American* colonies, would take this matter in hand in earnest, with a concern and resolution answerable to its real importance; and the whole community were properly disposed and engaged, the freedom of the slaves among us might soon be effected, without injury to the public, or those who shall be set at liberty; but greatly to the advantage of both. But if this should be neglected, will it excuse individuals who have slaves, in their continuing to hold them in bondage? I think not. If you, Sir, had as many children in slavery at *Algiers*, as you have *African* slaves in your house, would you take no pains, and devise no method to obtain their liberty, till the public should make some provision for the emancipation of all slaves there? If any opportunity should present, to obtain their liberty, would you not greedily embrace it, tho' at much hazard and expence? And if

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their master should refuse to let them go free, till there was a general emancipation of the Christian slaves in that country, would you justify him as acting a proper, humane, and benevolent part? I trow not. How then can you excuse yourself, and deliver your own soul, while you have no compassion for these black children in your house, and refuse to break the yoke, the galling yoke, from off their necks, because your neighbours will not be so just and humane to their's!

Some masters say, they will give up their slaves, if all masters will do the same; but seem to think they are excused from setting their's free, so long as there is not a general manumission. What has just been observed is suited, I think, to shew the insufficiency of this excuse. Besides, if you desire to have all our slaves freed, why do you not set an example, by liberating your own? This might influence others to do the same; and then you might, with a good grace, plead the cause of these poor *Africans*. Whereas, while you retain your own slaves, your mouth is stopped, and your example serves to strengthen others, and keep them in countenance, while they practise this abominable oppression.

A. My servants have cost me a great deal of money, and it is not reasonable I should lose all that. If the public will indemnify me, and pay me what my servants are worth, I am willing to free them; and none can reasonably desire me to do it, on any other consideration.

B. If your neighbour buys a horse, or any beast, of a thief who stole it from you, while he had no thought that it was stolen, would you not think you had a right to demand your horse of your neighbour, and pronounce him very unjust, if he should refuse to deliver him to you, till he had received the whole sum he had given for him? And have not your servants as great a right to themselves, to their liberty, as you have to your stolen horse? They have been stolen and sold, and you have bought them,

in your own wrong, when you had much more reason to think they were stolen, than he who bought your horse had to mistrust he was trading with a thief. Tho' your horse has passed thro' many hands, and been sold ten times, you think you have a right to demand and take him, in whose soever hands you find him, without refunding a farthing of what he cost him; and yet, tho' your Negroes can prove their right to themselves, and constantly make a demand upon you to deliver them up, you refuse till they pay the full price you gave for them, because the civil law will not oblige you to do it.—

Thou Hypocrite! ————— *Luke 13. 15.*

Had you not been amazingly inconsiderate and stupid, you would have concluded these men were stolen; and known that no man had a right to sell them, or you to buy them: And must they be forever deprived of their right, which is worth more to them, than all you possess, because you have been so foolish and wicked as to buy them, and no one appears to prevent your losing by the bargain! You would do well to consider the awful denunciation by *Jeremiah*. *Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbours service without wages, and giveth him not for his work!* He who refuses to free his negroes to save his money, that he may lay it up for his children, and retains his slaves for them to tyrannize over, leaves them but a miserable inheritance—infinitely worse than nothing!

Besides, if indifferent persons were to judge, it would doubtless be found that many of your servants, if not all, have much more than earned what they cost you; some of them double and threble, yea, tentimes as much; and in this view, you ought to let them go out free; and not send them away empty; but furnish them liberally out of your store, agreeable to the divine command; they having a much better right to part of your estate, than your children, and, it may be, much more likely to make a good improvement of it. *A. You*

A. You speak of servants earning so much; but for my part, I think not so much of this. Mine have never been much profit to me, and most of them do not pay for their victuals and cloaths, but are constantly running in debt.

B. The master is not a proper judge in this case. How common is it for men who hire others, to complain that the laborers do not earn the wages they give; and that they are continually losing by all the labour they hire? And if it were wholly left to him who hires what wages he should give the laborer, & he was accountable to none, how soon would his hire be reduced to little or nothing. The lordly selfish employer would soon find out that his laborers hardly earned the food he was obliged to find them. Let your uninterested, judicious neighbours, judge between you and your servants in this matter, and we will give credit to their verdict. And surely you have no reason to expect we will rely on yours, as you seem not really to believe it your self, since it looks like a contradiction to your own declaration and practice. For you have been speaking of your servants as of as much worth to you, at least, as their first cost, and represented it as giving up your interest, if you should free them without a compensation. Whereas, if what you now say be true, you will lose nothing by freeing them immediately; but rather get rid of a burden now on your hands. And if this be true, why do you not free them without delay? Your holding them in slavery, is a practical contradiction to what you have now suggested.

I grant, what is evident to all the discerning who attend to it, that the introduction of such a number of slaves among us is a public detriment, an injury to the common wealth; and therefore, in this view, the practice ought by all means to be discouraged and abolished by our legislators: This however is consistent with individuals getting estates by the labor of their slaves; and that they
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are in fact in many instances very profitable to their owners, none can deny. And if this was not so, I should be very certain of obtaining what I am pleading for, even a general manumission.

A. You have repeatedly spoke of our slaves being hardly treated and abused. There may perhaps be some instances of this among us ; but I believe they are generally treated very well, and many of them much better than they deserve. My servants, I am sure have no reason to complain ; they live as well as I do myself, and in many respects much better.

B. We will take it for granted, for once, that all you have said is true ; and that your slaves are treated as well as they can be, while they are held in a state of slavery. But will this atone for your making them your slaves, and taking from them that which it better to them than not only the best living, but all the riches on earth, and is as much to be prized as life itself, **THEIR LIBERTY** ? As well, yea, with much more reason may a highway-robber, tell a gentleman from whom he has taken all his money, he has no reason to complain, since he had spared his life, which was at his mercy, nor had wounded him, or striped him of his cloaths : and go away pleased with the thought that he had treated him with great kindness and generosity.

If a ruffian should seize, ravish and carry off a young virgin from all her relations and friends, into some lonely cave in the wilderness ; and when he had got full possession of her there, should treat her with great kindness, providing for her every necessary and comfort she could have in that situation. And when he was told of his violence and cruelty, and urged to restore her to her former liberty ; he should refuse to release her, and to justify himself, alledge his kind treatment of her, that she had all the comforts of life, and lived better than himself, &c. Would not this be so far from justifying him in the sight
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of the world, or being the least excuse for his barbarous treatment of her, that his offering it as such, would be considered as a striking evidence of his stupidity, and that he was an unfeeling, inhumane wretch? Whether such an instance is in any measure applicable to the case before us, I leave you to judge.

But I must now ask leave to take back, what was just now granted; and observe, that you are not a proper judge of your treatment of your slaves; and that you may think you treat them very well, when, in some instances at least, if not in a constant way, they justly think themselves used very hardly, being really subjected to many hardships, which you would very sensibly feel and resent, if you were in their place, or should see one of your children a slave in *Algiers* treated so by his master. There are but few masters of slaves, I believe, who do not use them in a hard, unreasonable manner, in some instances at least; and most do so in a constant way; so that an impartial, attentive by-stander will be shocked with it, while the master is wholly insensible of any wrong. They who from us have visited the *West-Indies*, have beheld how servants are used by their masters there, with a degree of horror, and pronounced them very unreasonable and barbarous; while the master, and perhaps his other domestics have thought they were used well, being accustomed to such usage, and never once reflecting that these blacks were in any sense on a level with themselves, or that they have the least right to the treatment white people may reasonably expect of one another; and being habituated to view these slaves more beneath themselves, than the very beasts really are. And are we not, most of us, educated in these prejudices, and led to view the slaves among us, in such a mean, despicable light, as not to be sensible of the abuses they suffer; when if we or our children should receive such treatment, from any of our fellow men, it would appear terrible in our sight? The

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circumstances ? How few are fit to be masters ? To have the sovereign dominion over a number of their fellow men, being his property, and wholly at his disposal ; who must abide his sentence and orders, however unreasonable, without any possibility of relief ?

A. I believe my slaves are so far from thinking themselves abused, or being in the least uneasy in a state of slavery, that they have no desire to be made free, and if their freedom were offered to them, they would refuse to accept it.

B. I must take leave to call this in question, Sir ; and I think you believe it, in contradiction to all reason, and the strongest feelings of human nature, till they have declared it themselves, having had opportunity for due deliberation, and being in circumstances to act freely, without the least constraint.

There are many masters (if we believe what they say) who please themselves with this fond opinion of their goodness to their slaves, and their choice of a state of slavery, in preference to freedom, without the least foundation, and while the contrary is known to be true by all who are acquainted with their slaves. If they really believe this, they by it only discover great insensibility, and want of proper reflection. They have not so much as put themselves in the place of their slaves, so as properly and with due sensibility to consult what would be their own feelings, on such a supposition. Have they themselves lost all desire of freedom ? Are they destitute of all taste of the sweets of it ; and have they no aversion to slavery, for themselves and children ? If they have these feelings, what reason have they to conclude their servants have not ?

But it seems most of those masters do not fully believe what they so often say on this head : For they have never made the trial ; nor can they be persuaded to do it. Let
them

them offer freedom to their servants; and give them opportunity to choose for themselves, without being under the most distant constraint. And if they then deliberately choose to continue their slaves, the matter will be fairly decided, and they may continue to possess them with a good conscience. *

Slaves are generally under such disadvantages, and restraints, that however much they desire liberty, they dare not so much as mention it to their masters. And if their masters should order them into his presence, and ask them whether they had a desire to be made free, many would not dare to declare their choice, lest it should offend him, and instead of obtaining their freedom, bring themselves into a more evil case than they were in before, as the children of *Israel* did, by desiring *Pharaoh* to free them.

In this case such precaution ought to be taken, as to give the slaves proper assurance that they may without any danger to themselves, declare their choice of freedom: and that it shall be done to them according to their choice.

A. If slaves in general were made free, they would soon be in a worse state than that in which they now are. Many of them know not how to contrive for themselves, so as to get a living; but must soon be maintained by their former masters, or some others: And others would make themselves wretched, and become a great trouble to their neighbours, and an injury to the public, by their unrestrained vices. This would doubtless be the case with most of mine, were they set free; and some of them are by no means able to maintain themselves.

B. I confess this objection, at first view, seems to have some weight in it. But let us examine it, and see if it be sufficient to hold so many thousands in slavery, and their children.

* *But this will give them no right to make slaves of their children, even if the parents themselves should express consent to it; for the parent can have no right to sell the liberty of his children.*

(44)
children after them, to the end of the world. Would you have all the white people, who are given to hurtful vices, or are unwilling or unable to maintain themselves, made slaves, and their children after them, and be bought and sold for life like cattle in the market? Would you willingly give up your own children to this, to be slaves forever to any one who should be willing and able to purchase them, if they were as vicious, or helpless as you suppose many of the blacks would be if set at liberty? I am sure you will not answer in the affirmative. And by answering in the negative, as I know you must, you will entirely remove the reason you have now offered for holding the blacks in this slavery; till you can shew why the latter should be treated so very differently from the former, which I am confident you will not attempt.

A state of slavery has a mighty tendency to sink and contract the minds of men, and prevent their making improvements in useful knowledge of every kind: It sinks the mind down in darkness and despair; it takes off encouragements to activity, and to make improvements, and naturally tends to lead the enslaved to abandon themselves to a stupid carelessness, and to vices of all kinds. No wonder then the blacks among us are, many of them, so destitute of prudence and sagacity to act for themselves; and some are given to vice. It is rather a wonder there are so many instances of virtue, prudence, knowledge and industry among them. And shall we, because we have reduced them to this abject, helpless, miserable state, by our oppression of them, make this an argument for continuing them and their children in this wretched condition! God forbid! This ought rather to excite our pity, and arouse us to take some effectual method without delay, to deliver them and their children from this most unhappy state. If your own children were in this situation, would you offer this as a good reason why they and their posterity should be made slaves forever? Were some
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of your children unable to provide for themselves thro' infirmity of body, or want of mental capacity ; and others of them were very vicious, would you have them sold into a state of slavery for this ? or would you make slaves of them yourself ? Would you not be willing to take the best care of them in your power, and give them all possible encouragement to behave well, and direct and assist them in proper methods to get a living ? I know you would. And why will you not go and do likewise to your slaves ? Why will you not take off the galling yoke from their necks, and restore them to that liberty, to which they have as good a claim as you yourself and your children, and which has been violently taken from them, and unjustly withheld by you to this day ? If any of them are disposed to behave ill, and make a bad use of their freedom, let them have all the motives to behave well that can be laid before them. Let them be subject to the same restraints and laws, with other freemen ; and have the same care taken of them by the public. And be as ready to direct and assist those who want discretion and assistance to get a living, as if they were your own children ; and as willing to support the helpless, the infirm and aged. And give all proper encouragement and assistance to those who have served you well, and are like to get a good living, if not put under peculiar disadvantages, as freed negroes most commonly are ; by giving them reasonable wages for their labour, if they still continue with you, or liberally furnishing them with what is necessary in order to their living comfortably, and being in a way to provide for themselves. This was the divine command to the people of *Israel* ; and does it not appear, at least, equally reasonable, in the case before us ? When one of their brethren had served them the number of years that were specified, they were commanded to let him go out free ; and then the following injunction is added : *And when thou sendest him out free from thee,*
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thou shalt not let him go away empty : Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine press : Of that wherewith the LORD thy GOD hath blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him, Deut. 15. 13, 14.

If all who have slaves, would act such a just, wise, and benevolent part towards them, and treat them in any measure as they would desire their own children and near relations should be treated, our slaves might all be set free, without any detriment to themselves or the public; and their masters would be so far from losing by it, that they would be abundantly rewarded for all their benevolence to these injured poor. And if our legislators would lend their helping hand, and form such laws and regulations, as shall be properly suited to protect and assist those that were freed, and so as in the best manner to deter and restrain them from vicious courses, and encourage their industry and good behaviour; this would be an additional security to the public against any imagined evil consequence of a general manumission of our slaves; and but a piece of justice to these poor dependent creatures, whom we have made so by our own unrighteousness and oppression. This would encourage masters to free their slaves, and leave the objection we are now considering without the least shadow of foundation.

A. You are doubtless sensible, Sir, that the legislatures in these colonies, are so far from giving this encouragement to manumit our slaves, that the laws are rather a clog or hindrance to any thing of this kind, as they require the master to give security for the maintenance of his slaves, if they should ever want any assistance, before he is allowed to make them free.

B. I am sorry to say there is too much truth in this. I hope our legislators will soon attend with proper concern to this affair; and in their justice, wisdom and goodness, enter upon measures which shall encourage and effect a general emancipation of our slaves. But

But if this should not be, I think it appears from the course of this conversation, that this will not excuse those who have slaves from setting them at liberty, even tho' they should be obliged to maintain them all their days. If any slave holder, can lay his hand on his breast, and sincerely say, if his children were slaves in *Algiers*, he would not desire their master to free them, unless he could do it, without any risque of their ever being a charge to him; then let him still hold his slaves in bondage with a quiet conscience. Otherwise, I see not how he can do it.

A. If it were granted that our slaves ought to be freed, if times and the public state of the *American* colonies would admit. Yet in our present peculiar, calamitous, distressing state, it may be very imprudent and wrong, and tend to great evil, to adopt this measure. Most of the slaves in populous sea-port places, have now little or no business to do, and are supported by their masters, while they earn little or nothing. And if they should be dismissed by their masters, they could not maintain themselves, and must suffer. And the attention and exertion of the public is so necessarily turned to the defence of ourselves; and this civil war introduces such calamity and confusion, that it cannot be expected; yea 'tis quite impossible, that there should be any proper care of the public, so as to make the provision and regulations which would be absolutely necessary in this case. Though I suggested this in the beginning of our conversation, yet I think you have paid little or no attention to it. I wish this might be well considered.

B. I think the facts you have now alledged, as reasons against freeing our slaves at present, will, if duly considered, afford arguments for the very thing you are opposing. The slaves who are become unprofitable to their masters, by the present calamitous state of our country, will be with the less reluctance set at liberty, if

is hoped ; and if no public provision be made for them, that they may be transported to *Africa*, where they might probably live better than in any other country ; or be removed into those places in this land, where they may have profitable business, and are wanted, now so many are called from their farms to defend our country.—I say, if this be not done, the masters, by freeing them, would lose nothing by it, even tho' they continue to support them, till some way shall open for them to help themselves. I must here again desire every owner of slaves to make the case his own, and consider, if he or his children were unjustly in a state of slavery, whether he should think such an objection against their being set at liberty of any weight ? Would he not rather think it reasonable that the masters who had held them in bondage, against all right and reason, would consider their being, by an extraordinary providence, rendered unprofitable to them, as an admonition to break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquity by shewing mercy to these poor ? And that it ought to be a greater satisfaction to them, thus to do justice without delay, and relieve these oppressed poor, than to possess all the riches, honors and pleasures of this world ? And if these masters should disregard such an admonition, and neglect this opportunity to set them at liberty, putting it off to a more convenient season, would it not be very grievous to him, and overwhelm him in despair of their ever doing it ? Is it not very certain that they who make this objection against freeing their slaves without delay, would not free them, if the times should change, and they again become profitable ? If they must maintain them, can they not do it as well when they are free, as while they are slaves ; and ought they not to do it with much more satisfaction ? And as to the public, all necessary regulations and provision might easily, and very soon be made even in our present distressing circumstances, effectually to emancipate

cipate all our slaves, were the minds of men in general properly impressed with their misery, and they sufficiently engaged to do justice, and shew mercy.*

This objection might be urged with much greater shew of reason by the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, against freeing their servants when they were not only in a state of war, but shut up, and closely besieged in that city; yet we find it was their duty to free them immediately, as the only way to escape threatened destruction; and as soon as they had done this, they had respite, and would have obtained final deliverance, had they not returned to their old oppression, and again brought their freed servants into bondage.

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* God is so ordering it in his providence, that it seems absolutely necessary something should speedily be done with respect to the slaves among us, in order to our safety, and to prevent their turning against us in our present struggle, in order to get their liberty. Our oppressors have planned to gain the blacks, and induce them to take up arms against us, by promising them liberty, on this condition; and this plan they are prosecuting to the utmost of their power, by which means they have persuaded numbers to join them. And should we attempt to restrain them by force and severity, keeping a strict guard over them, and punishing them severely, who shall be detected in attempting to join our opposers; this will only be making bad worse, and serve to render our inconsistency, oppression and cruelty, more criminal, perspicuous and shocking, and bring down the righteous vengeance of heaven on our heads. The only way pointed out to prevent this threatening evil, is to set the blacks at liberty ourselves, by some public acts and laws; and then give them proper encouragement to labour, or take arms in the defence of the American cause, as they shall choose. This would at once be doing them some degree of justice, and defeating our enemies in the scheme they are prosecuting.

This leads me to observe, that our distresses are come upon us in such a way, and the occasion of the present war is such, as in the most clear and striking manner to point out the sin of holding our blacks in slavery, and admonish us to reform, and render us shockingly inconsistent with ourselves, and amazingly guilty if we refuse. God has raised up men to attempt to deprive us of liberty; and the evil we are threatened with is slavery: This, with our vigorous attempts to avoid it, is the ground of all our distresses, and the general voice is, 'We will die in the attempt, rather than submit to slavery.' But are we at the same time making slaves of many thousands of our brethren, who have as good a right to liberty as ourselves, and to whom it is as sweet as it is to us, and the contrary as dreadful! Are we holding them in the most abject, miserable state of slavery, without the least compassionate feeling towards them or their posterity; utterly refusing to take off the oppressive galling yoke! Oh, the shocking, the intolerable inconsistency! And this gross, barefaced, practiced inconsistency, is an open, practical condemnation of holding these our brethren in slavery; and in these circumstances the crime of persisting in it becomes unspeakably greater and more provoking in God's sight; so that all the former unrighteousness and cruelty exercised in this practice, is innocence, compared with the awful guilt that is now contracted. And in allusion to the words of our Saviour, it may with great truth and propriety be said "If he had not thus come in his providence, and spoken unto us, (comparatively speaking) we had not had sin, in making bond-slaves of our brethren; but now, we have no cloak for our sin."

And if we continue in this evil practice, and refuse to let the oppressed go free, under all this light and admonition, suited to convince and reform us; and while God is evidently correcting us for it, as well as for other sins, have

have we any reason to expect deliverance from the calamities we are under? May we not rather look for slavery and destruction, like that which came upon the obstinate, unreformed *Jews*? In this light, I think, it ought to be considered by us; and viewed thus, it affords a most forcible, formidable argument, not to put off liberating our slaves to a more convenient time; but to arise, all as one man, and do it with all our might, without delay, since delaying in this case is awfully dangerous, as well as unspeakably criminal. This was hinted in the beginning of our conversation, you may remember, and I am glad of an opportunity to consider it more particularly.

A. You have repeatedly spoken of the attempt that is made to oppress and enslave the *American Colonies*, and the calamities this has introduced, as a judgment which God has brought upon us for enslaving the *Africans*, and say we have no reason to expect deliverance, but still greater judgments, unless this practice be reformed. But is not this supposition inconsistent with the course of divine Providence since this war began? Have we not been strengthened and succeeded in our opposition to the measures taken against us, even beyond our most sanguine expectations; and a series of events, very extraordinary, and almost miraculous, have taken place in our favor, and so as remarkably to disappoint our opposers, and baffle them in all their plots and attempts against us. How is this consistent with the above supposition? If these calamities were brought on us for our sin in enslaving the *Africans*, and an expression of God's displeasure with us on that account, would he in such a signal manner appear on our side, and favor, protect and prosper us; even so that those of our enemies, who are considerate and attentive, have been obliged to acknowledge God was for us; I say, could this be, while we persist in that practice so offensive to him?

B. When

B. When I speak of our being under the divine judgments for this sin of enslaving the *Africans*, I do not mean to exclude other public crying sins found among us, such as impiety and profaneness—formality and indifference in the service and cause of Christ and his religion—and the various ways of open opposition to it—intemperance and prodigality; and other instances of unrighteousness, &c. the fruits of a most criminal, contracted selfishness, which is the source of the high-handed oppression we are considering. But that this is a sin most particularly pointed out, and so contrary to our holy religion in every view of it, and such an open violation of all the laws of righteousness, humanity, and charity, and so contrary to our professions and exertions in the cause of liberty, that we have no reason to expect, nor can sincerely ask deliverance, so long as we continue in a disposition to hold fast this iniquity. If we should be delivered, while we continue in this evil practice and obstinately refuse *thoroughly* to execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, but go on to oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, we should, agreeable to the spirit of what you have just said, improve such deliverance, as God said the *Jews* would have done, had he delivered them, while they refused to reform. ‘Will ye steal, murder, &c. and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, *We are delivered to do all these abominations?*’* Surely this is not to be expected or desired. Even the prayer for such deliverance must be an abomination to the Lord.

But your objection is worthy of a more particular answer.—It has been observ'd, that there has been a general resolution to suppress the slave-trade in these colonies, and to import no more slaves from *Africa*. This is a remarkable instance of our professed regard to justice, and a wise and notable step towards a reformation of this evil; and, as has been observ'd, a compleat re-

* See Jer. 7. 5, — 10.

formation

formation will be the unavoidable consequence, if we will be consistent with ourselves. For no reason can be given for suppressing the slave-trade, which is not equally a reason for freeing all those who have been reduced to a state of slavery by that trade; and that same regard to justice, humanity and mercy, which will induce us to acquiesce in the former, will certainly oblige us to practice the latter. Have we not, therefore, reason to think that the righteous, and infinitely merciful Governor of the world, has been pleased to testify his well-pleasèdness with that regard to righteousness and mercy which we professed, and appeared to exercise, in refusing to import any more slaves; and which is an implicit condemnation of all the slavery practisèd among us, by appearing on our side in the remarkable, extraordinary manner you have mentioned; by which wonderful interposition in our favor, he has at the same time given us the greatest encouragement not to stop what we have begun, but to go on to a thorough reformation, and act consistently with ourselves, by breaking every yoke, and doing justice to all our oppressed slaves; as well as to repent of and reform all our open, public sins? So that God is hereby shewing us what he can do for us, and how happy we may be, under his protection, if we will *thoroughly* amend our ways, and our doings; and loudly calling us to a thorough reformation, in this most kind and winning way.

But if we obstinately refusè to reform, what we have implicitly declared to be wrong, and engaged to put away the holding the *Africans* in slavery, which is so particularly pointed out by the evil we are threatened with, and is such a glaring contradiction to our professed aversion to slavery and struggle for civil liberty; and improve the favor God is shewing us, as an argument in favor of this iniquity, and encouragement to persist in it, as you, Sir, have just now done; have we not the
greatest

greatest reason to fear, yea, may we not with great certainty conclude, God will yet withdraw his kind protection from us, and punish us yet seven times more? This has been God's usual way of dealing with his professing people; and who can say it is not most reasonable and wise? He then acts the most friendly part to these Colonies and to the masters of slaves, as well as to the slaves themselves, who does his utmost to effect a general emancipation of the *Africans* among us: And in this view I could wish the conversation we have now had on this subject, if nothing better is like to be done, were published and spread thro' all the Colonies, and had the attentive perusal of every *American*.



A N A D D R E S S

To the Owners of Negro Slaves in the
American Colonies.

GENTLEMEN,

SINCE it has been determined to publish the preceding dialogue, it was thought proper it should be attended with a particular address to you, who are more immediately interested in the slavery there considered.

It would be injurious, it is confessed, to consider you as the only persons guilty or concerned in this matter. The several legislatures in these colonies, the magistrates, and the body of the people have doubtless been greatly guilty in approving & encouraging, or at least conniving at this practice. Yea, every one is in a measure guilty, who has been inattentive to this oppression, and unaffected with it, and neglected to bear proper testimony against it, and do all in his power to put a stop to it. And it is granted the public ought to go into some effectual measures to liberate all the slaves, without laying an unreasonable burden on their masters. But tho' this be not done, such neglect will not excuse you in holding them in slavery, as it is in your power to set them free, and your indispensable duty, and really your interest, to do them this piece of justice, tho' others should neglect to assist you, as they ought.

It is hoped you will not be offended with the plainness of speech used on this subject; and that, tho' you should at first think some of the epithets and expressions which are used, too severe, and find the subject itself disagreeable, this will not prevent your attentively considering it, and weighing what is offered, with the utmost impartiality, and readiness to receive conviction, how much soever you may find yourselves condemned. For, if your practice is here

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set in a true light, in which it must appear to all impartial, judicious, good men; and in which it will appear to all, at the day of judgment, you must be sensible you cannot too soon admit the conviction, and reform. And here it cannot be improper to remind you of your liability to strong prejudices, which tend to prevent your seeing what in itself may be very plain. Our divine teacher says, "Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov-
ed." If you are indeed doing evil, according to the import of the preceding dialogue, these words of *Christ* are so far applicable to you, and are suited to awaken your jealousy of yourselves, and lead you to attend to the subject with great concern, circumspection, and earnest prayer to the Father of lights, for that discerning and wisdom, by which you may, in the case depending, come to the knowledge of the truth. And is it not worthy your serious consideration, that they who are not interested in this practice, and have no slaves, are generally, if not every one, fully convinced it is wrong? Are they not, at least many of them, as capable of judging in this matter, as you yourselves are; and therefore more likely to judge right than you, as they are uninterested and impartial? The conviction of the unjustifiableness of this practice has been increasing, and greatly spread of late; and many who have had slaves, have found themselves so unable to justify their own conduct in holding them in bondage, as to be induced to set them at liberty. May this conviction soon reach every owner of slaves in *North-America!*

To this end you are desired to consider, what is more than once urged in the dialogue, viz.

The very inconsistent part you act, while you are thus enslaving your fellow men, and yet condemning, and strenuously opposing those who are attempting to bring you and your children into a state of bondage,
much

much lighter than that in which you keep your slaves; who yet have at least as good a right to make slaves of you and your children, as you have to hold your brethren in this state of bondage. Men do not love to be inconsistent with themselves: and therefore this is so evident and glaring, that if you will only suffer yourselves to reflect a moment, it must give you pain, from which you can find no relief, but by freeing your slaves, or relinquishing the cause of public liberty, which you have thought so glorious, and worthy to be pursued at the risk of your fortunes and lives.

A general assembly of one of these colonies,* have expressed their conviction of this inconsistency, and given it as a reason for freeing our slaves, in the following words, “Whereas the inhabitants of *America* “are generally engaged in the preservation of their “own rights and liberties, among which that of personal freedom must be considered as the greatest; “and as those who are desirous of enjoying all the
H “advantages

* RHODE-ISLAND. *This is a preamble to a proposed act, ‘prohibiting the importation of Negroes into this colony, and asserting the rights of freedom of all those hereafter born or manumitted within the same.’ It is observable, at first view, that the reason given for this act, is equally a reason for actually freeing ALL the Negro slaves in the colony, without delay. As Rhode-Island has been more deeply interested in the slave-trade, and has enslaved more of the poor Africans, than any other colony in New-England, it has been to the honor of that colony, that they have lately made a law prohibiting the importation of any more slaves. How becoming, honorable and happy would it have been, had they acted up to the truth asserted in the preamble mentioned, and taken the lead of all the united Colonies, in effectually providing for the freedom of all their slaves!*

“ advantages of liberty themselves, should be willing
 “ to extend personal liberty to others ; Therefore,
 “ be it enacted,” &c.—Is it possible that any one
 should not feel the irresistible force of this reason ?
 And who would be willing to practice this glaring
 self-contradiction, rather than let his servants go out
 free even tho’ he should hereby give up the greatest
 part of his living, yea, every penny he has in the
 world ! With what propriety will all such inconsis-
 tent oppressors be addressed, by HIM before whom
 masters and their slaves will shortly stand, as their
 impartial judge ? *‘ Out of thine own mouth will I judge
 thee, thou wicked servant !’*

Be intreated also seriously to consider, how very
 offensive to God unrighteousness, and the oppression
 of the poor, the stranger and fatherless, is represented
 to be, in the holy scripture. This is often spoken of
 as the procuring cause of the calamities that came on
 God’s professing people of old, and of their final ruin.
 It may suffice to quote a few passages of this tenor,
 and refer you to places where others are to be found.
Jer. 21. 12. ‘ O house of David, thus saith the LORD,
 Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him
 that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my
 fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench
 it because of the evil of your doings.’ *Ezek. 22. 29,*
30, 31. ‘ The people of the land have used oppression,
 and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and
 needy : yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrong-
 fully.—And I sought for a man among them,
 that should make up the hedge, &c.—but I found
 none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation
 upon them,’ &c.—*Amos 2. 6.* ‘ Thus saith the Lord,
 For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will
 not turn away the punishment thereof, because they sold
 the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes.’
Zech. 7. 9, —14. ‘ Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts,

saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother. And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, *the stranger nor the poor*; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken— yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone— Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts, &c. *

Are not the *African* slaves among us the poor, the strangers, the fatherless, who are oppressed and vexed, and sold for silver? And will not God visit and punish such oppression? Are you willing to be the instruments of bringing judgments and ruin on this land, and on yourselves and families, rather than let the oppressed go out free?

On the contrary, mercy, deliverance and prosperity were often promised them, if they would leave off their oppressions, and do justice, and shew mercy, in delivering the oppressed, and shewing kindness to the stranger and the poor. *Isa. 1. 16,—18.* ‘Cease to do evil, learn to do well, *seek judgment, relieve the oppressed*, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow— Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow— If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land.’ *Jer. 7. 1,—7.* ‘Stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say— If ye thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; *If ye thoroughly excuse judgment between a man and his neighbour, if ye oppress not the stranger*, the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place— then will I cause you to dwell—in the land I gave to your fathers, forever and ever.’ *Jer. 22. 1,—4.* ‘Thus saith the Lord, Execute

* See to the same purpose, *Isa. 3. 14, 15. 10. 1,—4. Jer. 5. 27,—29. 6. 6, 7. 22. 13,—17. Amos 4. 1, 2. 5. 11, 12. 8. 4,—8.*

cute ye judgment and righteousness, & deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor ; and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor widow— For if ye do this thing indeed,' &c. *

How can we attend to the voice of God in these sacred writings, and not see that you are most clearly pointed out. And will you be affronted, or even disregard us, while we intreat and conjure you, by all that is important and sacred, so far to regard these threatenings and promises, and pursue your own highest interest and that of the public, as to let your oppressed slaves go out free ! Do not say, ' This is too great a sacrifice for us to make ; who will indemnify us, if we give up our servants ? The sovereign owner of all things has promised you indemnity ; yea, infinitely more ; deliverance from the awful curse which comes upon the oppressor, and his protection and blessing. And here it may be proper to remind you of the divine answer to the king of *Judah*, when, being ordered to dismiss the mercenaries he had procured to assist him, he asked, what he should do for the hundred talents which this army had cost him ? * And the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this,' 2 *Chron.* 25. 6,—9.

Consider also, how very inconsistent this injustice and oppression is with worshipping God thro' Christ, and attending on the institutions of religion ; and how unacceptable and abominable these must be, while you neglect to let the oppressed go free, and refuse to do justice, and love mercy. The bible is full of declarations of this: §

' To do justice and judgment, is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.' Without the former, the latter

* See also *Isa.* 33. 15, 16. 58. 6, &c. *Jer.* 5. 1.

§ Read *Isa.* 58. and *ch.* 1. v. 10,—18. *Amos* 5. 21,—24.

latter is nothing but gross hypocrify, and abomination to God ; for he ' will have mercy, and not sacrifice.' He requires no devotion, or attendance on any religious right or institution, which is inconsistent with mercy, or that is done without the love and exercise of mercy ; but rejects all such prayers and service, as most dishonorable and abominable to him. And when we consider, that Christianity is the greatest instance and exhibition of righteousness and mercy that was ever known, or can be conceived of : And the great Author of it is, in the most eminent and glorious degree, THE JUST GOD AND THE SAVIOUR ; we shall not wonder that no offering can be acceptable to him, which is without the exercise and practice of righteousness and mercy : And that ' he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy.'

You who are professors of religion, and yet the owners of slaves, are intreated well to consider, how you must appear in the sight of God, and of all who view your conduct in a true light, while you attend your family and public devotions, and sit down from time to time, at the table of the Lord. If your neighbour wrong you of a few shillings, you think him utterly unfit to attend that sacred ordinance with you ; but what is this, to the wrong you are doing to your brethren, whom you are holding in slavery ! Should a man at *Algiers* have a number of your children his slaves, and should, by some means be converted, and become a professor of Christianity, would you not expect he would soon set your children at liberty ? And if after you had particularly dealt with him about it, and offered abundant light and matter of conviction, of the oppression and cruelty he was guilty of, he should be deaf to all you could say, and resolve to hold them and their children in slavery, what would you think of him, when you see him at his prayers,

prayers, and attending at the Lord's supper? Would you think he was more acceptable to God, than if he neglected these institutions, and yet had been so just and merciful, as to set all his slaves at liberty? Yea, would you scruple to say, his devotion and attendance of the holy supper were hypocrisy and abomination? If *Nathan* the prophet was here, he would say, '*Thou art the man.*' *

The Friends, who are commonly called Quakers, have been for a number of years, bearing testimony against this oppression, as inconsistent with Christianity; and striving to purge themselves of this iniquity, rejecting those from fellowship with them, who will not free their slaves. They indeed do not attend the Lord's supper; and it is granted they are herein neglecting an important institution of Christ: But ought it

* It is granted this oppression has been practised in ignorance by many, if not the most, who have been owners of slaves: And tho' this has been a very criminal ignorance; yet professors of religion, and real christians may have lived in this sin thro' ignorance, consistent with sincerity, and so as to be acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, in their devotions, &c. But tho' God has in times past suffered us ignorantly to walk in this wicked way, he is now using special means to open our eyes, and commands all every where, to repent of this iniquity. And they who persist in this sin, in opposition to the clear light, and alarming admonitions which are now set before us, will greatly aggravate their own guilt, if they do not hereby give just reason to suspect the sincerity of their profession. Some who are in the scriptures declared to be good men, lived in evil practices, consistent with sincerity in their attendance on divine institutions; which practices no Christian can now live in, consistent with his Christian Character; because we enjoy much greater light than they had, and these evil ways are more fully exposed and condemned.

it not to alarm you to think, that while you are condemning them for this neglect, your attendance, in the omission of that righteousness and mercy which they practice, is inexpressibly more dishonorable and offensive to Christ, than their neglect! These things you ought *first* to have done, to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke; and then not leave the other undone.

May you all, in this day of your visitation, know and practice the things that belong to your peace, and the safety and happiness of the united *American* colonies, by no longer oppressing these *poor strangers* wrongfully, and doing violence to them; but by executing judgment, relieve the oppressed, and deliver the spoiled out of the hands of the oppressor! May this counsel be acceptable unto you, and you break off this your sin, and all your sins, by righteousness, and your iniquities by shewing mercy to these poor; that it may be a lengthening of the tranquility of yourselves, your families, and of this now distressed land!

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March 1940

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